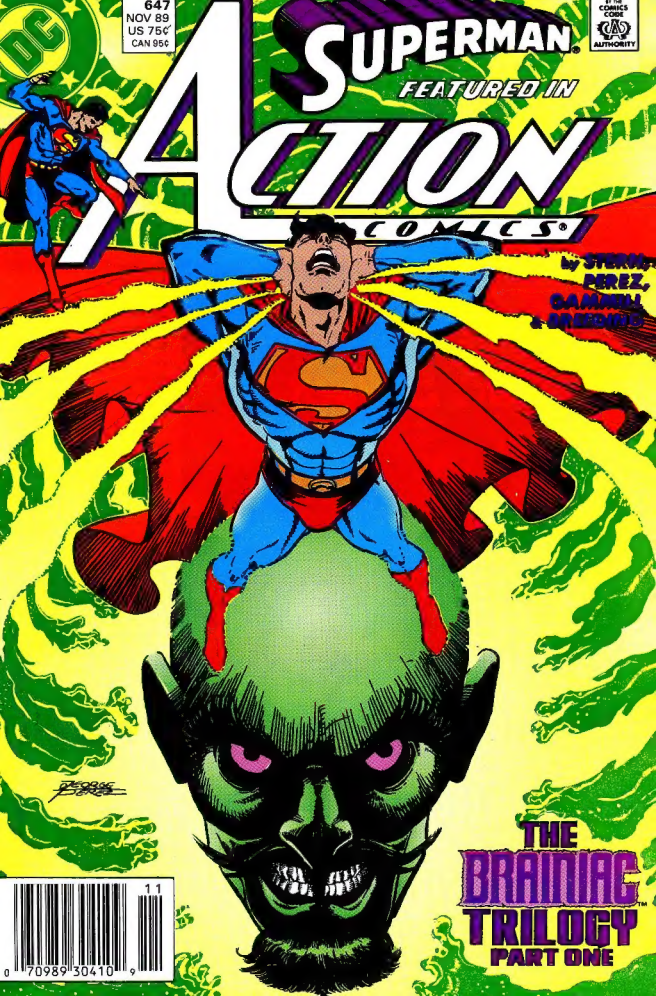




64
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THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

SUPERMAN

FEATURED IN

ACTION
COMICS®

by STERN,
PEREZ,
GAMMILL
& BREEDING

THE
BRAINAC
TRILOGY™
PART ONE



0 70989 30410 9

BRAIN DRAIN



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STERN
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GAMMILL
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ACTION COMICS #647 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ACTION COMICS, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 6528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate \$9.00, Canada \$14.00, all other foreign \$21.00. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1989 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representatives: Print Advertising Representatives, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
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YOU ARE A FOOL,
FLYING MAN...

"... I HAVE BARELY BEGUN
TO TAP THE POTENTIAL
OF THIS HOST BODY!"

YOU'RE
INSANE,
FINE!

Hot Dogs!

YOU A
BOY?

I AM NOT
MILTON FINE, SUPERMAN--
I AM VRIIL DOX OF THE
PLANET COLL! BUT I
POSSESS FINE'S BODY--
FINE'S POWER!

I HAVE
BECOME
BRAINIAC--
AND YOUR
MASTER!

"ALL BEINGS HAVE
AN INHERENT
EVIL WITHIN..."

"... I SHALL
LIBERATE
YOUR BASER
DESIRES..."

"... FREE YOUR DARK SIDE!"

NO...
NO!!



"FREE YOUR
DARK SIDE!"

N-N-NO... I HAVE SO
MUCH POWER. SUPER-
MAN MUST EXERCISE
CONTROL... SHOW
COMPASSION...

"FREE YOUR
DARK SIDE!"

...BUT...
GANG-
BUSTER...

BRAINIAC,
YOU MUST BE CRAZY
TO CHALLENGE ME
IN BROAD DAY-
LIGHT!

...GANGBUSTER
SHOWS NO MERCY!
I RULE THE
NIGHT!

YOU
WON'T
ESCAPE
ME--!

WRONG AGAIN,
SUPERMAN--

--YOU'LL
NOT TAKE ME
ALIVE!

POOOOSH



I CANNOT LET YOU MAN-
HANDLE LUTHOR, GANGBUSTER
... I'VE GROWN ALMOST FOND
OF MY PARTNER!

GRISH HIM,
BRAINIAC! I
WANT TO SEE HIM
SQUIRM!

B-BRAINIAC?
I THOUGHT YOU
DIED... FIGHTING
SUPERMAN!

MY
"DEATH" WAS A
MERE CHARADE
FOR PUBLIC
CONSUMPTION.

WHAT...
ARE YOU
DOING...
TO ME?

"FEELING YOUR MIND,
GANGBUSTER...
LIKE AN ONION!"

"I WANT TO
KNOW WHAT DRIVES...
A... MAN... LIKE..."

...YOU!



BRAINIAC!!

SO! THAT WAS THE ONE PIECE
OF THE PUZZLE MISSING FROM
MY MEMORIES OF MY "CAREER
AS GANGBUSTER."



MY SUBCONSCIOUS
HAD BLOCKED IT OUT
BUT NOW... IT FINALLY
MAKES SENSE.

BRAINIAC IS
SOMEHOW
TIED IN WITH
LUTHOR...



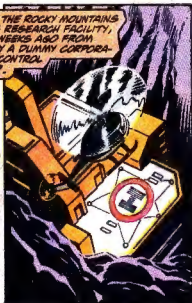
"... AND HE'S OUT
THERE SOMEWHERE
... ALIVE!"



"I MUST
FIND HIM--"

"...WHEREVER
HE IS!"

IN THE HEART OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS
LIES A PSIONICS RESEARCH FACILITY,
ACQUIRED JUST WEEKS AGO FROM
S.T.A.R. LABS BY A DUMMY CORPORATION
UNDER THE CONTROL
OF LEX LUTHER.



IT HAS BEEN
SPECIFICALLY OUT-
FITTED FOR THE
PURPOSE OF
STUDYING ONE
INDIVIDUAL..

THE OBJECT OF THAT STUDY,
HOWEVER, IS NOT AS HELPLESS
AS HIS OBSERVERS
ASSUME...

SUPERMAN KNOWS
--I CAN FEEL IT!

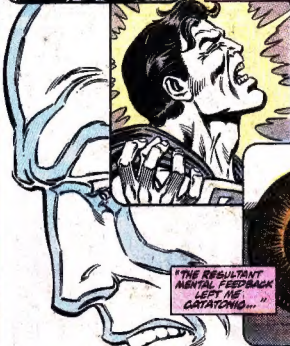
AND I'VE
ONLY MYSELF
TO BLAME!



"MY ATTEMPT TO DEBASE AND ENTHRALL HIM
INADVERTENTLY LED TO THE CREATION OF HIS
GANGBUSTER PERSONA. BUT I DID NOT
REALIZE THE TWO OF THEM WERE ONE --



"--UNTIL I FOOLISHLY ATTACKED
HIM IN HIS GANGBUSTER GUISE.
I WAS ILL- PREPARED FOR SO
DIRECT AN ENCOUNTER WITH
SUPERMAN'S POWERFUL MIND.



"THE RESULTANT
MENTAL FEEDBACK
LEFT ME
CATATONIC..."



"... A CONDITION WHICH MY ERSTWHILE PARTNER NATURALLY HASTENED TO EXPLOIT! HOW 'SELFLESS' OF LUTHOR TO ASSIGN ME HIS OWN PERSONAL PHYSICIAN! SHE KEPT ME DRUGGED AND HELPLESS..."



"... THE BETTER FOR HIS CYBERNETICIST TO STUDY THIS BODY'S BRAIN. THE IDIOTS! THEY ONLY FORCED ME TO TURN MY MIND INWARD..."



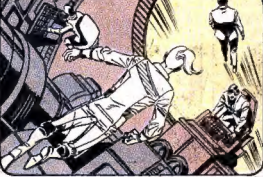
"... UNTIL I FOUND THE WILL TO BREAK FREE OF FINE'S MORTAL SHELL..."



"UNENCUMBERED BY THE PHYSICAL, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INVESTIGATE THIS FACILITY'S EVERY CORNER..."



"... AND PLAN MY ESCAPE! "



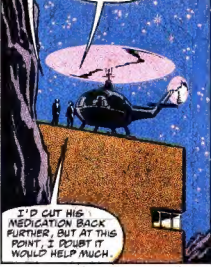
I HAD HOPED FOR MORE TIME TO SOLIDIFY MY PLANS...

-- BUT WITH SUPERMAN AWARE OF MY CONTINUED EXISTENCE, I MUST ACT QUICKLY!



"HOW MUCH TIME DOES BRAINIAC HAVE, KELLEY..."

"I MEAN, REALISTICALLY? HARD TO SAY. HE COULD DIE TOMORROW... OR LINGER FOR WEEKS."



I'D CUT HIS MEDICATION BACK FURTHER, BUT AT THIS POINT, I DOUBT IT WOULD HELP MUCH.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO TELL LUTHOR?



THE TRUTH. BELIEVE ME, LYING TO LEX IS NOT A GOOD IDEA!

SEE YOU IN A FEW DAYS, SYD.



I HOPE BRAINIAC LINGERS, KELLEY. I NEED MORE TIME TO FIGURE OUT WHAT MAKES HIM TICK!



DR. HAPPERTSEN? THE CHOPPER DROPPED OFF SOMETHING FOR YOU... FROM THE MISSOURI PLANT.

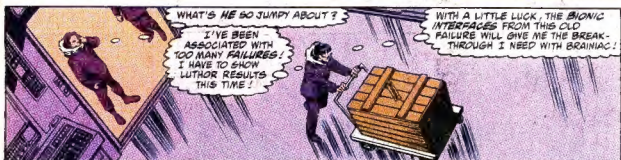
THANK GOD!

YES, I WAS EXPECTING THAT!



WANT US TO GIVE YOU A HAND--?

NO! NO... AH, I CAN MANAGE, THANKS!



WHAT'S HE SO JUMPY ABOUT?

I'VE BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH TOO MANY FAILURES! I HAVE TO SHOW LUTHOR RESULTS THIS TIME!

WITH A LITTLE LUCK, THE BIONIC INTERFACES FROM THIS OLD FAILURE WILL GIVE ME THE BREAK-THROUGH I NEED WITH BRAINIAC!



MORNING, OLD BOY. SORRY FOR THE EARLY START--



--BUT I SUPPOSE THAT HARDLY MATTERS TO YOU!

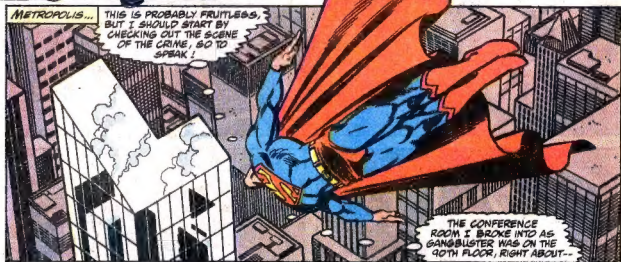


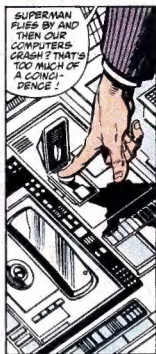
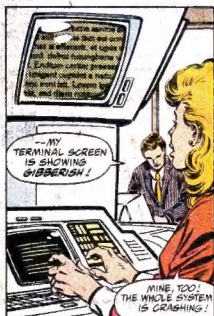
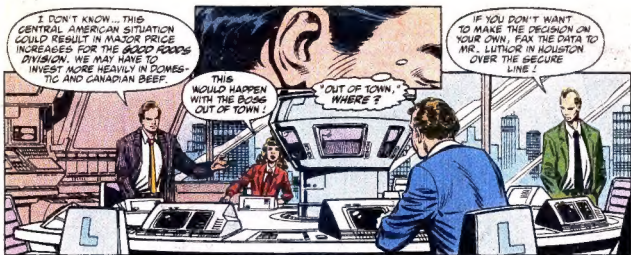
ON THE CONTRARY, DOCTOR--

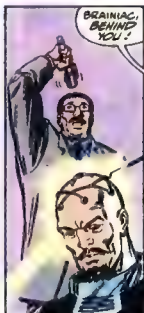
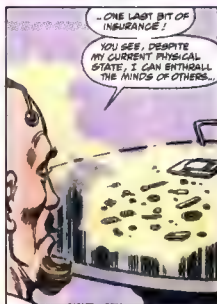


--IT MATTERS A GREAT DEAL!

WHU--?!







"-- AND THEN WE SHALL
SETTLE A SCORE WITH
YOUR EMPLOYER! "

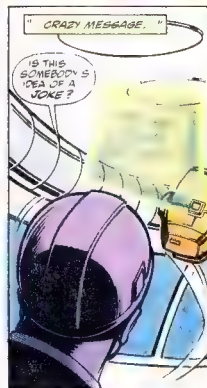
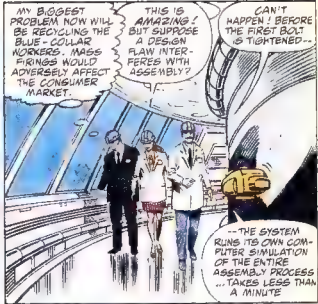
WE'VE SAVED THE
BEST FOR LAST, MR.
LUTHOR: BELOW
US--

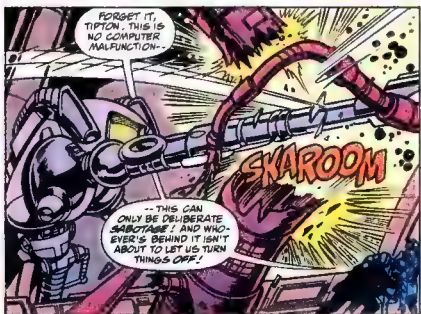
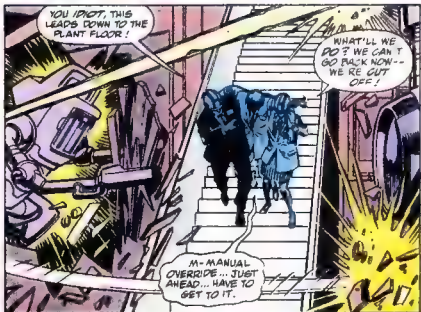
-- YOU SEE THE
WORLD'S FIRST TOTALLY-
AUTOMATED ARMAMENT
FACTORY!

"WITH THIS NEW PLANT ON LINE,
WE CAN GO FROM SCHEMATIC TO
FINISHED PRODUCT IN LESS
THAN A DAY -- WITHOUT USING
A SINGLE HUMAN ASSEMBLY
WORKER!"

"EVEN MAINTENANCE
AND REPAIR IS
HANDLED BY ROBOTICS!"

"RIGHT NOW, WE'RE RUNNING
OFF PROTOTYPES OF THE NEW
L-87 ARMORED ASSAULT
VEHICLE. ALL OF THEM SHOULD
BE READY FOR TESTING BEFORE
YOU LEAVE HERE TODAY!"





AT THAT MOMENT, HIGH OVER HOUSTON...

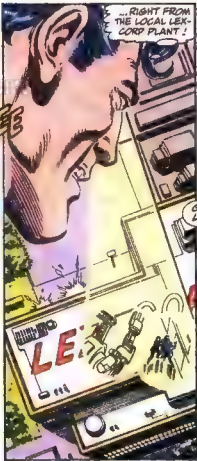
NO SIGN OF LUTHOR IN HIS BOARD ROOMS DOWNTOWN. I'LL SWING BY HIS INDUSTRIAL PARK BEFORE I HEAD FOR THE OIL FIELDS.

WHAT'S THAT—SOME KIND OF SIREN? WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S COMING.

AAOOWEEEEEE

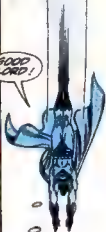


...RIGHT FROM THE LOCAL LEX-CORD PLANT!

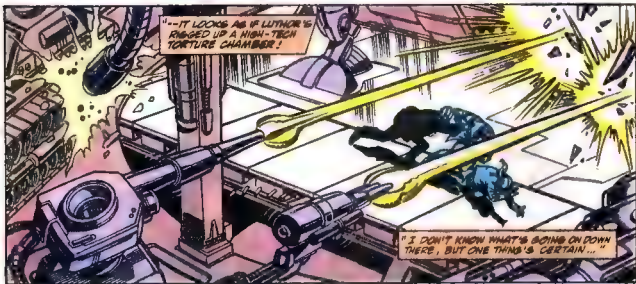


GOOD LORD!

FROM UP HERE --



"--IT LOOKS AS IF LUTHOR'S RIGGED UP A HIGH-TECH TORTURE CHAMBER!"

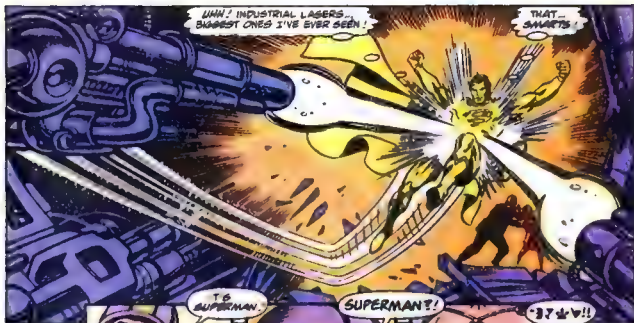


"I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE, BUT ONE THING'S CERTAIN..."

...THOSE PEOPLE NEED HELP!



KR-BOOM!



"THEN WE SHALL SEE HOW A SO-CALLED
"MAN OF STEEL" FARES AGAINST AN ENTIRE
FACTORY OF DEATH!"

SUPERMAN, BE
CAREFUL OF
THAT!

CONCERN?
FROM YOU?

YOU KNOW
WHAT I MEAN!
THOSE
ROBOTICS COST
BILLIONS!

REALLY?

DO YOU
VALUE THEM
OVER YOUR OWN
LIFE?

I'LL TAKE THAT
SILENCE FOR A
NEGATIVE.

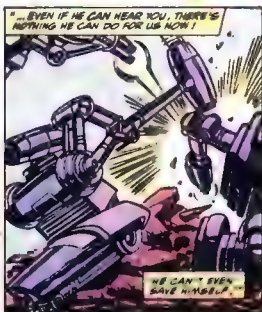
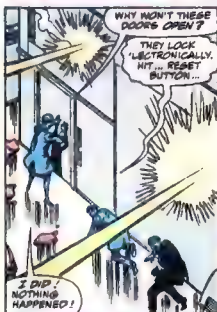
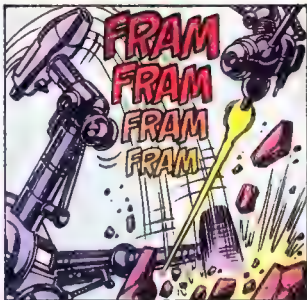
KER-RUNK

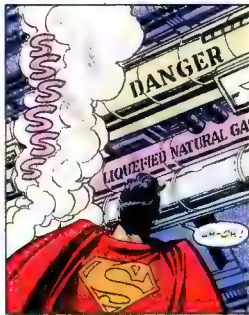
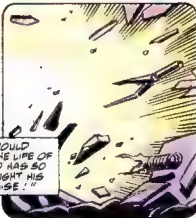
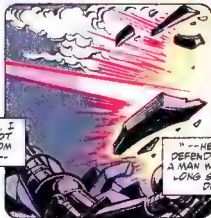
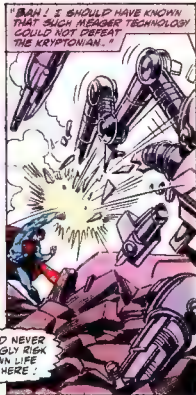
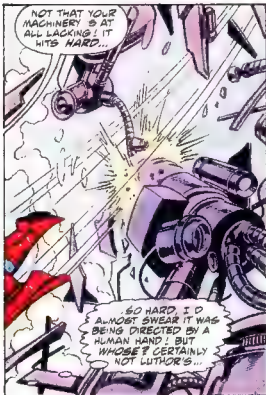
AND NOW
LET'S SEE
ABOUT--

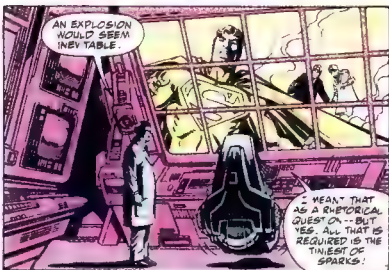
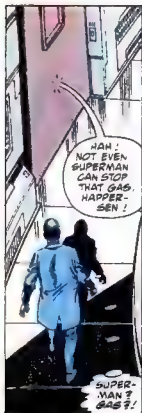
WHUNK

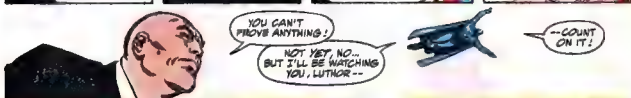
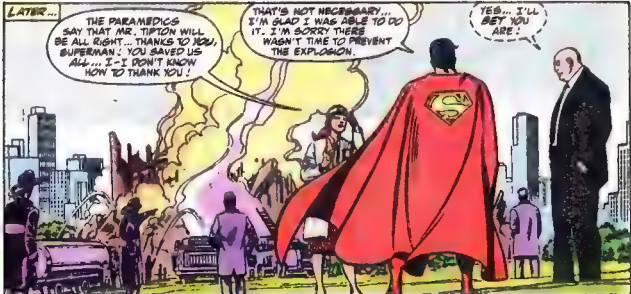
I SEEM TO
HAVE GOTTEN
... THEIR
ATTENTION

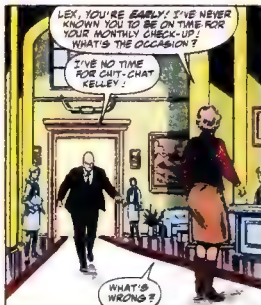
--GUNGH!











... A MOST
CONVINCING
PERFORM-
ANCE !

BUT NOW, THERE
IS MUCH WORK TO BE
DONE ! IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT
MY PHYSICAL BODY BE FULLY
RESTORED ... PERHAPS EVEN
IMPROVED, EH ?

YOU WILL SUPERVISE THE
OPERATIONS OF THIS
FACILITY TOWARDS ACCOM-
PLISHING THAT END, WHILE
MY NEW ASSOCIATE,
MR. CORBEN -- !

CORBEN WAS
THE NAME OF MY OLD
BODY, BRAINIAC !
YOU KNOW WHAT TO
CALL ME NOW !

AS YOU
WISH !

FIELD
OPERATIONS WILL
BE HANDLED BY MY
NEW ASSOCIATE ...
METALLO !

NEXT ISSUE :
THE MYSTERY OF
METALLO ! MAYHEM
IN METROPOLIS ! AND
MUCH, MUCH MORE !

BODY & MIND !

REACTION

DC COMICS INC.

666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103

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L-5215

As we said last month, your response to the first issue of the newly revised ACTION COMICS has been phenomenal—more than one pair of letters pages could possibly handle! Soooooo, here're another pair of pages devoted to your thoughts about Superman's return to Earth in ACTION COMICS #643:

Dear Editor:

At last—the return of ACTION COMICS! It was an overwhelming development. It was dominated, of course, by the astonishing and thrilling return of Superman to Earth—but that was just the centerpiece. Turmoil was defeated, Morgan Edge had a heart attack, and Matrix was blown up in an explosion caused by the Eradicator. Lurking in the wings were Luthor and Brainiac, and hardly anyone noticed.

It was Superman's return, however, that riveted the imagination. The single image that comes back, the one I'll always cherish, is that of the opening pages as Superman zoomed toward Earth. It was one of those rare sequences that had no need for exposition.

You saw the scene: the stars and planets stark against the panoramic blackness of space—when a lone figure, clad in red and blue, rushed into the panel ... intent on his destination. He soared over a great metropolitan city, garnering the attention of mortal men, and landing atop a tall building. A few seconds passed ... an excited man shouted: "Wait! It's him! He's come back! It's Superman!" The red cape on the hero's broad shoulders danced in the breeze ... he smiled. The Man of Steel was truly home.

He turned from his place, high above Metropolis ... friends gathered about him ... the moment was over.

But for brief seconds, a man armed only with the moral force of his beliefs knew the choice he had made was the right one. It was a perfect metaphor for what you feel when you do what your gut tells you is the only thing to do.

Superman is back on Earth ... and I hope he never leaves. He does stand for truth, justice, and the American way. We are indeed fortunate to witness his acts of bravery and to marvel at them.

Howard T. Kidd
Manilla, IA

Dear Sirs:

I've just read ACTION COMICS #643 ... it's great to see Mister George Pérez

on this title. Brett Breeding is the perfect choice as finisher here, perfectly complementing George's layouts.

All in all, #643 was a great issue through and through. What with three SUPERMAN titles a month, the "Big Red S" is flying higher than ever before. I'm only happy to be along for the ride.

Garry Stephenson
20 Magnolia Way
Shildon, County Durham
England, 2AH

Hey, Gang:

I really enjoyed ACTION COMICS #643.

Both the writing and the artwork were absolutely topnotch efforts.

It's quite gratifying to see one of DC's oldest and most respected characters being handled in such a manner.

Keep up the fine work.

Uncle Elvis
17650 Dawson Road
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

Dear Editor:

It was great to see Superman's full-length return to ACTION COMICS. It was also great to see such talented artists as George Pérez and Brett Breeding handling the whole book.

The most logical place to start comment is on the cover. It was really good and showed Pérez's truly perfect style. It was also nice to see him give tribute to Joe Shuster.

The next logical place to turn a critical eye to is the story. I'm glad that this was the story that brought Superman back to Earth. Though I really enjoyed the "Exile in Space" storyline, this issue tied it up perfectly. (One thing I might've liked to see continue from that epic was Superman's wearing of a beard. It looked great!) Still, I'm glad the Man of Steel returned in time to stop Turmoil and save everyone involved in the story. I do hope Jose will be all right. I also hope that the defeat of Turmoil is not the end of the Intergang plot-thread. It was interesting to see that DeSaad can be almost as rotten as Darkseid. His impersonation was great.

But the absolute best thing about the issue wasn't the battle itself, it was to see everyone's reactions to Superman's triumphant return! From Jimmy's hug to Matrix's surprise to Edge's heart attack, they were all magnificent. Even

Superman's need for a shower was neat.

Great issue. Keep 'em coming. Thanks.

Mark Billian
RD 3 Box 115
Malvern, PA 19355

DC:

Yay! Yay! Yay! You gave Superman a more durable cape! To top that off, the Cleric even gave him the Eradicator for keeps! Now Superman can really learn about his Kryptonian heritage!

The Eradicator: It slices! It dices! It even shaves that troublesome beard!

Lon Wolf
2118 Ryan's Run East
Maple Shade, NJ 08052

Dear Editor:

I just finished reading my copy of ACTION COMICS #643 and I found it to be like a breath of fresh air. What I liked about this story was the vitality and freshness of the art. The story was written with zest and jubilation. It was very exciting and dynamic to read.

With all the praise, I had only one quail about the story: the return of the indestructible cape! I liked seeing Superman's cape shredded and tattered. It gave me a distinct and instant feeling that he had been through a good fight. I hate to say it, but the indestructible cape makes him more like the pre-CRISIS demigod—rather than a "man" of steel!

Chris Manydeeds
(No address given)

Dear DC:

Da-da-DA, da-da-da-DA! Da-da-DA, da-da-da-DA! Da-da-da-DA-da, da-da-da-DA! Da-da-da-DA-DA-DA-DA, da-da-daaaaaaa..." ("Sung to the tune of John Williams's "Superman: The Movie" theme).

Okay, so it's an unusual way to start a letter. But then again, I'm feeling unusually good about ACTION COMICS #643. Superman is back where he belongs—on Earth, and in ACTION COMICS (MONTHLY)! And just in the nick of time, judging from what he had to do to Turmoil (nice maneuver with the new, improved, indestructible cape, by the way!)

Edge's heart attack was unexpected, though I'm sure the Apokolips affair will open right back up once Superman discovers who Edge thought was backing his schemes.

Anyway, I won't keep you any longer—welcome back, and see you in thirty!

Erik C. Miller
Eigenmann #658
Bloomington, IN 47406

Dear Mike:

What can I possibly say about ACTION COMICS #643 that would do it justice? It was fantastic! You gave us Superman! You gave us the Daily Planet! You gave us the American flag! You gave us Superman saving Lois Lane! You gave us Superman kicking some Apokoliptian bottom (I say, "bottom," 'cause you never know when your mom might be reading a letter column)! You gave us Perez! But most of all—you gave us ACTION!!!

If you have been unfortunate enough to catch some of my other letters in the other SUPERMAN titles, you know that I am constantly referring to the fact that people grimace and give me strange looks when I ask them if they've read SUPERMAN lately. I am always spouting off about how great the books are—and I finally made some progress this week, when, after constant browbeating, a fellow comics fan said he was going to scoop up back issues to give the Man of Steel a try. Who says that one man can't make a difference? (Just think about the guy who invented elastic next time you're in a doubting mood. Where would your socks and underwear be now without that man? Around your ankles, that's where! One man can make a difference!)

In closing I would like to say that if those Superman-skeptics out there didn't like ACTION #643, they'll never like Superman. Come to think of it—if they didn't like Superman in the first place, why would they be reading ACTION #643? Okay, so I blew my reasoning all to hell—ummm, er, blazes! (Hi, Mom!)

Regardless, my interest in Superman has hit an all-time high—which is pretty impressive considering I've been reading SUPERMAN comics since the late 1960s.

I eagerly await next month's offering!
Kip Talbott
P.O. Box 206
Dayton, VA 22821

Dear Carlin and Company:

From its cover with its great homage to SUPERMAN #1 (first series), ACTION COMICS #643 was a splendid piece of work.

George Pérez's story was true to the characters (both old and new) that are part of the Superman mythos. Brett Breeding and the other creators should also be proud of their work.

Gerry Wilson
1121G—Apt B
Lincoln, NE 68508

Dear Mike and Jonathan:

Superman is back!
ACTION COMICS is back!
George and Brett are here! (To stay, I hope!)

George Pérez has outdone himself. The secret of Darkseld was nice (I was beginning to wonder why someone as powerful as Darkseld would bother with a worm like Edge) ... though my favorite part was the Miller-esque silhouette of the Man of Steel in front of the American flag on page 4.

Thank you all for restoring the legend.

Rol Hirst
Rushgrove farm
Holt Head, Slaithwaite
Huddersfield, W. Yorks
HD7 5TY, England

DC:

He's baaaaaack! Supes is back!! The "Big BLUE Cheese" is back on Earth!! Glory! Glory!

Jeez, I haven't been this excited since I spotted Elvyn at Sears buying jump cables.

Lon Wolf
(Same address as before)

Dear Editor:

The Man of Steel IS back where he belongs! ACTION #643 was "super" (pun intended, of course!) From the opening scene to the shot of Matrix holding the Eradicator at the end, this book was brilliant.

On pages 2 through 6 you could see Superman's obvious joy at being back on Earth after months of being lost in space! The brief appearance of Lex Luthor on page 7 was just enough to count. You could see the satisfaction on his face at seeing Superman back. You could just tell he's already plotting something not only insidious and cold-blooded, but also down and dirty. All that in one panel! Good job, guys! I'm glad, though, that Clark's friends were spotlighted much more than that pig Luthor.

The moment of silent reverence for the late Cleric was great, as was the shower scene on page 10. Superman taking a shower is something you just wouldn't see in the old days. (Oh, and Clark, doesn't the signal watch always ring when you're in the shower?)

Suspense was the key word on pages 11 through 20. Suspense and—ACTION! Lois and Jose in danger, Metropolis in danger, Cat and Jimmy in danger ... and Superman there to save the day!! The battle with Turmoil was worth the admission price in this book alone!

Morgan Edge having a heart attack on page 20 was a surprise, and a welcome one. It was also a logical event. Page 21

Talk about surprises! DeSaad impersonating Darkseld! What a clever way of looking at Kirby's characters from the Fourth World series!

As for Superman, Jose, and Lois ... well, I have a similar thing going with a girl I knew in high school (Hi, Erica!), and we form a triangle with another guy (altogether this thing covers three states even! I'm in Arkansas, Erica goes to college in Alabama, and the other guy is in Louisiana! And Jose thinks he has it bad!) But I think Erica's coming around, so Jose, hang in there with Lois—you just might get somewhere yet!

In my fifteen and a half years of reading comics, this is one of the few that suitably impressed me enough to write. Keep up the "Super" work, gang!

Bryan W. Fraizre
2026 W. Stone
Fayetteville, AK 72701

Whew! We actually kept our big yaps shut for two whole pages! (Call Guinness!) We would like to thank each and every one of you who wrote to ACTION #643—and any, and all titles in the SUPERMAN, ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN, and ACTION trilogy of steel! That's everyone—from seasoned letterhacks (some of whom even wrote TWO letters this month—Lon Wolf, who spotted you, Uncle Elvis, the day you had that car trouble) to all the newcomers to these pages (Good luck with Erica, Bryan!)—we couldn't do this three times a month without your continued support. Thanks again!

NEXT IN "SUPERMAN": #38 to be exact, Jimmy Olsen's recent problems escalate when he disappears from Earth completely! The problems of Metropolis's citizens escalate when they all face Husque—the guy who's replaced Jimmy on the Man of Steel's plane of existence! Jerry Ordway writes and pencils, while Dennis Janke inks, in just fourteen days!

NEXT IN "ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN": #461 to be exact, Superman "zones out" until he returns to Antarctica to destroy the Eradicator once and for all! Also, Clark Kent gets a job offer that could lead to his leaving the Daily Planet! Dan Jurgens writes and pencils, while George Pérez inks, in just twenty-one days!

NEXT IN "ACTION COMICS": #648 to be exact, the second part of our "Brainiac Trilogy" pits Superman against an army of Metallos! Brainiac's "reconstruction" plan continues apace, as Lex Luthor gets wind of what his "partner" is been up to while he's been dealing with Superman's return to action! Roger Stern writes, George Pérez lays out, Kerry Gammill "tightens" (we're still not sure precisely what this means—all we know is that Kerry sends us a bill every month!) and Brett Breeding does the finishes (which means everything else the other guys didn't do—more than you might think, considering all the names in this title's credit box!), in just twenty-eight days!!

—Mike Carlin



SOOPAH-BEAST, SOOPAH-BEAST!
HE'S SOOPAH-BEASTLY!